DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 451 025 RC 022 918

| | |
|---|---|
| TITLE | Guidelines for Strengthening Indigenous Languages. |
| INSTITUTION | Alaska Univ., Fairbanks. Alaska Native Knowledge Network. |
| PUB DATE | 2001-02-00 |
| NOTE | 10p.; Adopted by the Assembly of Alaska Native Educators (Anchorage, AK, February 6, 2001). |
| AVAILABLE FROM | Alaska Native Knowledge Network. Full text at Web site: http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/standards/Language.html. |
| PUB TYPE | Guides - Non-Classroom (055) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC01 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Alaska Natives; *American Indian Languages; *Community Role; Cultural Maintenance; *Eskimo Aleut Languages; Language Acquisition; *Language Maintenance; *Native Language Instruction; Older Adults; *Parent Role; School Role; Teacher Role |
| IDENTIFIERS | Alaska |

ABSTRACT

These guidelines offer suggestions for strengthening Alaska's indigenous languages. The guidelines aim to provide assistance to the local language advisory committees created under Senate Bill 103, that are responsible for making recommendations about the future of the heritage language in their community. The underlying theme is that heritage languages must be used in daily activities in the home and community so that they are transmitted and acquired naturally. Schools serve a supportive role by providing appropriate language immersion programs that strengthen the language used in the community. Throughout this document, Elders are recognized as the primary source of language expertise and cultural knowledge. Guidelines are presented for Native elders, parents, aspiring language learners, Native communities and organizations, educators, schools, education agencies, linguists working with Native communities, and media producers. In addition, general recommendations are offered to federal and state agencies, school districts, tribal colleges, Native organizations, and linguists to support the effective implementation of the guidelines. (SV)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

# GUIDELINES FOR STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

ED 451 025

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Ray Barnhardt
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

**Sponsored by:**

ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES
ALASKA RURAL SYSTEMIC INITIATIVE
ALASKA RURAL CHALLENGE
CENTER FOR CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES
ALASKA NATIVE KNOWLEDGE NETWORK
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGE CENTER
ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CIULISTET RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION OF INTERIOR NATIVE EDUCATORS
SOUTHEAST NATIVE EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION
NORTH SLOPE IÑUPIAQ EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION OF NATIVE EDUCATORS OF THE LOWER KUSKOKWIM
ASSOCIATION OF NORTHWEST NATIVE EDUCATORS
ASSOCIATION OF UNANGAN/UNANGAS EDUCATORS
ALASKA NATIVE EDUCATION STUDENT ASSOCIATION
ALASKA NATIVE EDUCATION COUNCIL
ALASKA FIRST NATIONS RESEARCH NETWORK
CONSORTIUM FOR ALASKA NATIVE HIGHER EDUCATION
NATIVE EDUCATORS OF THE ALUTIIQ REGION
NATIVE HAWAIIAN EDUCATION COUNCIL

**Adopted by the**
**Assembly of Alaska Native Educators**
**Anchorage, Alaska**
**February 6, 2001**

RC 022918



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# GUIDELINES FOR STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

The following guidelines offer suggestions for our Elders, parents, children and educators to use in strengthening their heritage language, with support from the Native community, schools, linguists and education agencies. It is essential that we speak our own languages in our daily lives to help us instill pride, knowledge and respect in our children. Language learning takes dedication, persistence, devotion, motivation and support from everyone living in the community. By laying out these guidelines, we hope to set a foundation that will help us continue learning and promoting all of our languages.

The guidance offered in the following pages is intended to provide assistance to the local Language Advisory Committees created under Senate Bill 103 that are responsible for making recommendations regarding the future of the heritage language in their community. The underlying theme is, to keep a language going, we must use it in our daily activities at home and in the community so that it is transmitted and acquired naturally. The schools serve a supportive role by providing appropriate language immersion programs that strengthen the language used in the community. It is hoped that these guidelines will promote the daily use of indigenous languages throughout Alaska and that our educational institutions will support us in perpetuating our languages.

Native educators from throughout the state contributed to the development of these guidelines through a series of workshops and meetings associated with the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative. Representatives of the Native educator organizations listed on the cover participated in the meetings and ratified the final document. While there are special meanings that are sometimes used to distinguish between "indigenous languages" and "heritage languages," the terms are used interchangeably in this document to refer to languages that originated in the particular region in which they are used (indigenous) and are the embodiment of the cultural heritage of that region. Using these guidelines will expand the knowledge base and range of insights and expertise available to help schools and communities nurture and pass on their cultural heritage with respect and integrity.

Throughout this document, Elders are recognized as the primary source of language expertise and cultural knowledge. The identification of "Elders" as culture-bearers is not simply a matter of chronological age, but a function of the respect accorded to individuals in each community who exemplify the values and lifeways of the local culture and who possess the wisdom and willingness to pass their knowledge on to future generations. Respected Elders serve as the philosophers, professors and visionaries of a cultural community. In addition, many aspects of cultural knowledge can be learned from other members of a community who have not yet been recognized as Elders, but seek to practice and teach local lifeways in a culturally appropriate manner.

Along with these guidelines are a set of general recommendations aimed at stipulating the kind of steps that need to be taken to achieve the goals that have been outlined, as well as reference material to assist in that endeavor. State and federal agencies, universities, school districts and Native communities are all encouraged to review their policies, programs and practices and to adopt these guidelines and recommendations wherever appropriate. In so doing, the educational , linguistic and cultural development of students throughout Alaska will be enriched and the future well-being of the communities being served will be enhanced.

Further information on issues related to the implementation of these guidelines, as well as additional copies may be obtained from the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, Box 756730, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, AK 99775 (http://www.ankn.uaf.edu).

## Guidelines for Native Elders

*Respected Native Elders are the essential resources through whom the heritage language of a community and the meaning it is intended to convey can be learned.*

Native Elders (and other fluent speakers) can strengthen the use of their heritage language through the

following actions:

a. Keep the heritage language alive by using it as much as possible in everyday activities and in ceremonial events.
b. Assist younger speakers of the heritage language in expanding their fluency to deeper levels and enlist their support in passing the language on to other members of the community.
c. Take an active role in local and regional Elders Councils as a way to help formulate, document and pass on language traditions for future generations.
d. Utilize traditional ways of knowing, teaching, listening and learning in passing on the language and help others come to understand how the language is integrated with culture, especially spiritual traditions and the rules for living a proper life.
e. Be a role model for all generations by practicing and reinforcing traditional values and using the heritage language to maintain spiritual traditions and convey the history of the community.
f. Assist all members of the community (especially new parents) in providing opportunities for young children to grow up hearing their heritage language spoken in the home and community.
g. Support the use of traditional naming practices and help children and parents understand the significance of the names they are given, including the development of a family tree.
h. Assist others to acquire the heritage language by using it on an everyday basis, and serve as a mentor to those wishing to learn the language.
i. Be tolerant and patient with language learners when they make mistakes in speaking the language and be encouraging of their efforts by telling them you are proud of them.
j. Make traditional cultural values explicit and incorporate them in all aspects of life in the community, especially those involving the heritage language.
k. Use traditional terms and practices of recognition, welcoming, kinship and respect when greeting and addressing others, in the home as well as in community events.
l. Work to ensure that new words are culturally grounded in the world view of the heritage language so that it continues as a living language.
m. Help perpetuate the heritage language and traditions by purposely teaching concepts and terms specific to particular families and locales.

**Guidelines for Parents**

*Parents are the first teachers of their children and provide the foundation on which the language learning of future generations rests.*

Parents (and grandparents) can strengthen their heritage language through the following actions:

a. Take a proactive role in promoting the learning and use of the heritage language throughout the home, school and community.
b. Provide a loving, healthy and supportive environment for each child to learn their heritage language as a natural part of growing up, making sure they hear (and speak) the language as much as possible from prenatal through to adulthood.
c. Request the support of fluent language speakers in the community who can serve as mentors for learning and using the heritage language on an everyday basis.
d. Seek out information on the implications of first- and second-language learning and the benefits of children growing up multi-lingual (contact the Alaska Native Language Center or the Alaska Native Knowledge Network at UAF for assistance).
e. Volunteer to support, assist and encourage the language program in the school.
f. Make use of traditional naming practices and help each child understand the significance of the names they carry.
g. Help children understand their family history and the heritage(s) that shape who they are and form their identity.
h. Make use of local rituals and ceremonies to reinforce critical events in children's lives.
i. Read materials and sing to children in the heritage language whenever possible, including published transcripts of Elder's Conferences, traditional stories, family histories, children's

literature and songs, etc..
j. Teach children to use traditional kinship terms in referring to members of their family and community, and to understand and practice the meaning of those terms.
k. Be an active and full participant in all aspects of a child's up-bringing, including joint learning of the heritage language (if not already a fluent speaker) as a way of demonstrating the importance of the effort.
l. Provide opportunities for children to participate in purposeful conversation with others under supportive, non-threatening circumstances.
m. Believe in your child's ability to learn the language and encourage and support them in doing so (if lacking in fluency yourself, join in with the child in learning the language).
n. Recognize that language is a reflection of, and directly impacts, one's world view.

**Guidelines for Aspiring Language Learners**

*Indigenous language learners must take an active role in learning their heritage language and assume responsibility for the use of that language as contributing members of the family and community in which they live.*

Language learners can strengthen their heritage language through the following actions:

a. Take the initiative and create opportunities to listen to and speak the heritage language.
b. Take advantage of special times and places where people come and practice their language skills, particularly in an immersion environment.
c. Seek out a fluent language speaker who is willing to serve as a mentor and make arrangements to work with that person on a continuing basis engaged in language-intensive activities (e.g., Tanana Chiefs Conference Mentor-Apprentice Program).
d. Recognize the complexity of language learning and use as a way to help sustain the level of commitment needed to gain speaking fluency and the associated literacy skills.
e. Use available media to record and listen to stories in the heritage language and practice re-telling the stories to others.
f. Ask other speakers to participate in the respectful use of the heritage language in all appropriate situations.
g. Gather and repatriate resource materials in the heritage language from sources in the region, as well as from the Alaska Native Language Center.
h. Be persistent in the practice of the heritage language, even when embarrassed to speak in the presence of fluent speakers.
i. Whenever possible, spend time with an Elder speaking the heritage language and practicing proper protocol.
j. Learn the origins and meaning of words and practices associated with the heritage language.

**Guidelines for Native Communities and Organizations**

*Native communities and organizations must provide a healthy and supportive environment that reinforces the learning and use of the heritage language on an everyday basis.*

Communities and organizations can strengthen their heritage language through the following actions:

a. Encourage all community members to use their heritage language on a daily basis and to assist anyone interested in learning the language, especially young children.
b. Reinforce the importance of the heritage language by incorporating traditional terminology, language and protocols in all aspects of community life and organizational practices.
c. Begin and close all community events and gatherings with presentations in the heritage language offered by a respected Elder along with an aspiring language learner.

d. Promote active participation of community members in all discussions related to language maintenance, including the Language Curriculum Advisory Committees established through SB 103, and seek consensus on the role of the heritage language in the community.
e. Establish a local and/or cross-regional Language Commission with explicit responsibilities to provide guidance and support for all aspects of heritage language documentation and revitalization, including decisions regarding training and certification of language teachers, maintenance of traditional language patterns, and development of new words and vocabulary.
f. Support the establishment of Mentor/Apprentice programs in the community and region.
g. Disseminate information on funding programs that support heritage language initiatives and offer grant-writing training and assistance for communities to access the resources available (e.g., proposal templates for specific programs).
h. Promote traditional story-telling gatherings that help people experience the heritage language and gain a deeper understanding of a story's meaning, along with associated dances, games and ceremonies (e.g., a weekly story night).
i. Promote regular heritage language programming on all radio and television outlets in the region, including local news, noteworthy events, Elder story-telling, call-in programs and translations of print materials related to life in the surrounding community and region.
j. Publish posters on culturally relevant themes presented in the heritage language, including statements of Native philosophy and values to be promoted in the school and community.
k. Support the preparation of family histories in the community and biographies of those who have passed on, using traditional names and kinship terms where available.
l. Encourage local people to pursue journalism careers and participate in the National Native American Journalists Association to promote public awareness of heritage language issues.
m. Provide simultaneous translation equipment and services at all meetings so the heritage language can be used freely and without interruption.
n. Form strategic alliances with national and international indigenous organizations committed to the protection and revitalization of heritage languages and disseminate appropriate information to the community.
o. Assign responsibility for monitoring the implementation of these guidelines to an appropriate community organization.

**Guidelines for Educators**

*Educators are responsible for providing a supportive learning environment that reinforces the wishes of the parents and community for the language learning of the students in their care.*

Professional educators can help strengthen the heritage language through the following actions::

a. Make effective use of local expertise, especially Elders, as co-teachers whenever local language and cultural knowledge is being addressed in the curriculum.
b. Make every effort to utilize locally relevant curriculum materials with which students can readily identify, including materials prepared by Native authors.
c. Participate in local and regional Immersion Camps to learn the traditional language and cultural ways and their meaning in contemporary life.
d. Obtain first- and second-language teaching endorsements (and/or A.A. and B.A. degrees) as provided by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and UAF, and implement culturally appropriate approaches to first- and second-language teaching in accordance with the language history and aspirations of the local community.
e. Create an immersion environment to provide a natural context for language teaching/learning.
f. Recognize and validate all aspects of the knowledge students bring with them, and assist them in their on-going quest for personal and cultural affirmation.
g. Provide sufficient flexibility in scheduling Elder participation so they are able to fully share what they know, and provide enough advance notice for them to make the necessary preparations.
h. Align all subject matter with the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools and develop curriculum models that are based on the local cultural and environmental experiences of the

students.

i. Provide assistance in instructional methodologies for heritage language teachers — language teaching doesn't always come naturally.
j. For heritage language speakers, acquire reading and writing proficiency in the heritage language to serve as a model and to be able to assist students in developing their own literacy skills.

**Guidelines for Schools**

*Schools must be fully engaged with the life of the communities they serve so as to provide consistency of expectations in all aspects of students lives.*

Schools can help strengthen the heritage language through the following actions:

a. Make sure the language policies and practices in the school are consistent with the language aspirations of the parents and community.
b. Provide follow-through support for local Language Curriculum Advisory Committee recommendations, as well as incentives for students to participate in the heritage language programs that are offered.
c. Establish an easily accessible repository of heritage language resource materials and knowledgeable expertise from the community.
d. Set aside special times and places where students can come and practice their language skills in an immersion environment.
e. Incorporate appropriate traditional cultural values and beliefs in all teaching, particularly when the heritage language is involved.
f. Provide an in-depth cultural and language orientation program for all new teachers and administrators, including participation in an immersion camp with local Elders.
g. Collaborate with Elders and Native teachers from the local community to acquire a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the local, regional and statewide context in which the students live, particularly as it relates to the well-being and survival of the local culture.
h. Make use of locally produced resource materials in the local language (reports, videos, maps, books, tribal documents, etc.) in all subject areas and work in close collaboration with local agencies to enrich the curriculum beyond the scope of commercially produced texts.
i. Acquire expertise in first- and second-language teaching/learning and the benefits that accrue to children who grow up multi-lingual.
j. Provide heritage language courses for students in every high school in Alaska, especially those with Native students enrolled.
k. Implement annual awards in each school and school district in recognition of exemplary heritage language education efforts.
l. Develop illustrated readers (such as comic books) that utilize the heritage language in conjunction with visually relevant situations.
m. Use flexibility and make allowances for dialectical differences as much as possible in the preparation of curriculum materials and in the teaching of heritage languages.
n. Implement the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools in all aspects of the educational program, including those cultural standards that pertain to heritage languages.

**Guidelines for Education Agencies**

*Education agencies should provide a supportive policy, program and funding environment that encourages local initiative in the revitalization of the indigenous languages.*

Education Agencies can help strengthen indigenous languages through the following actions:

a. Provide ample opportunities for personnel associated with heritage language education to

participate in regional and statewide conferences, workshops and other events in which Native educators share their insights and practices around language learning issues.

b. Provide administrative and funding support for local education initiatives (Tribal Schools, Charter Schools, Immersion Programs) aimed at immersing students in their heritage language as the language of instruction in school.
c. Provide support for curriculum materials development in any area where heritage language programs are being implemented (including computer-assisted Native language translation capabilities and literacy support).
d. Provide the necessary waivers from existing regulatory requirements to insure that students being taught in their heritage language are not disadvantaged in any way, nor are they discouraged from continuing in a heritage language program of instruction through the highest grade-level available.
e. Implement appropriate long-term assessment processes for immersion and other heritage language programs.
f. Provide support for training heritage language and ESL teachers for all schools, as well as appropriate orientation to language issues for existing teachers, administrators and others associated with the schools.
g. Provide current resources and relevant research data to assist schools and districts in developing effective heritage language programs that also contribute to the overall educational achievement of the students.
h. Utilize the expertise associated with the regional Native Educator Associations and the Alaska Association of Bilingual Educators to provide guidance in language education policies and programs.

**Guidelines for Linguists**

*Linguists should assist local communities in the development of appropriate resource materials and teaching practices that nurture the use and perpetuation of the heritage language in each respective cultural community.*

Linguists can help strengthen heritage languages through the following actions:

a. Identify and utilize the expertise in participating communities to enhance the quality of linguistic data gathering and use caution in applying external frames of reference in its analysis and interpretation.
b. Contribute appropriate linguistic expertise on language teaching, learning, policies and planning in ways that are compatible with the heritage language aspirations of Native communities.
c. Provide encouragement and support for Native students interested in teaching their heritage language and/or becoming linguists.
d. Provide support, training, resources and technical assistance to language initiatives on-site in local communities so that maximum heritage language revitalization can be achieved.
e. Help prepare linguistic materials and templates of basic planning documents that are of direct benefit to indigenous people in their heritage language efforts.
f. Assist in the development and use of linguistically appropriate computer software and fonts that facilitate electronic composition and communication in the heritage languages.
g. Assist in the conservation and preservation of heritage language materials, including appropriate media and storage facilities.

**Guidelines for Media Producers**

*The producers of mass media should assume responsibility for providing culturally balanced materials and programming that reinforce the use of heritage languages.*

Media producers can help strengthen indigenous languages through the following actions:

a. Utilize a panel of local experts rather than a single source to corroborate translation and interpretation of language materials, as well as to construct words for new terms.
b. Encourage the use of the local languages in multimedia materials in ways that provide appropriate context for conveying accurate meaning and interpretation, including an appreciation for the subtleties of story construction, use of metaphor and oratorical skills.
c. Provide opportunities for Elders to share what they know in the local language and to have that knowledge represented in multimedia materials in a manner that retains its original meaning.
d. Prepare curriculum resource materials that utilize the local language, so as to make it as easy as possible for teachers to draw upon the local language in their teaching.

**General Recommendations**

The following recommendations are offered to support the effective implementation of the guidelines for strengthening indigenous languages.

1. The regional Native Educator Associations shall sponsor an annual Academy of Elders bringing together Native educators and Elders in an immersion camp setting to help the teachers acquire fluency in their language for use in their teaching.
2. Native language specialists through the regional Native Educator Associations (including Elders) shall develop guidelines for assessing fluency and/or levels of proficiency in heritage languages for use in various contexts.
3. Regional Tribal Colleges shall provide a support structure for the implementation of these guidelines and the teaching of the heritage languages in each of the respective regions.
4. Federal and state funding support for indigenous language initiatives shall be expanded and all Native language funding should be administered through, or in partnership with Native-controlled entities.
5. An Alaska Native publishing house shall be established to promote and support the publication of Native language materials.
6. The Alaska Native Language Center shall establish regionally-based affiliates in each major linguistic region to provide more direct local access to and involvement in the Center's programs and services.
7. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development shall provide incentives to school districts for the implementation of the SB 103 Advisory Committee recommendations.
8. School Districts shall provide opportunities and incentives for all new teachers to participate in a language and cultural orientation program appropriate to the area in which they will teach.
9. School Districts shall require a Cross-Cultural Specialist Endorsement for all personnel with responsibilities that impact the cultural well-being of the students and communities they serve.
10. The guidelines outlined above shall be incorporated in university courses and made an integral part of all teacher preparation and cultural orientation programs.
11. SB 103 Advisory Committees shall be provided with knowledgeable assistance on the interpretation and application of the guidelines outlined above.
12. An annotated bibliography of resource materials that address issues associated with indigenous language learning shall be maintained on the Alaska Native Knowledge Network web site .

---



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Return to ANKN Home Page

Comments or questions? Contact the Alaska Native Knowledge Network